

# City of Mississauga Memorandum



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Date: 2022/06/21

To: Road Safety Committee

From: Rob Trewartha – Director, Strategic Communications and Initiatives  
Susan Tanabe – Acting Director, Infrastructure Planning and Engineering Services

Meeting Date: 2022/06/28

Subject: City of Mississauga Road Safety Committee Mascot Request

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## **Context**

The Road Safety Committee has been in discussion about the development of a mascot concept. The discussions have focused on some preliminary concept ideas, but presently, no formal concept has been established. In advance of the upcoming municipal election and the term for Road Safety Committee coming to a close, there has been some discussion about staff taking the lead on the development of the Committee's mascot.

The following memo outlines considerations for the development of a City mascot and the complexity of the logistics of both a digital and physical mascot, especially one dedicated to a serious and sensitive subject like road safety and Vision Zero.

## **Concept**

**Image** – The image used for the mascot needs to reflect typical messaging shared with the public by the Road Safety Committee. Road safety is a serious topic and therefore, any mascot developed to represent the Road Safety Committee should be done with careful and serious consideration on how the public will receive it.

**Tone** – In the past, campaigns and messaging shared with the public regarding road safety have been serious in nature and targeted all road users with specific emphasis on driver responsibility. Mascots tend to be an animated version of a static object, which can often read as cartoonish. Mascots have typically been used to cater messaging to children by catching their attention. Consideration needs to be given for how and if these goals can work together.

**Target Audience** – As stated above, mascots tend to be used for campaigns and messaging targeted to children and their families. Currently, the Road Safety Committee and Road Safety and Vision Zero staff at the City do not focus their messaging and content to children. A mascot for the Committee should resonate with an older audience. Based on the target audience, a calendar or schedule of events that are appropriate to that audience would need to be developed.

## **Design Considerations**

**Professional Services** – The City’s Creative Services team has limited capacity to develop a mascot concept and artwork prior to the close of the Road Safety Committee. There are a number of factors that need to be taken into consideration and the existing preliminary concepts would need to be refined prior to developing the concept for the mascot. The development of a formal mascot concept will also require consultations and assistance from an external vendor who specializes in mascot design, especially if the intention is to ultimately purchase a costume of the same likeness.

## **Digital Presence**

There has been some discussion regarding this mascot having its own digital presence on social media. City practice is to focus messaging to the City’s corporate social media accounts for maximum reach. It takes significant time and effort to build a social media following for a new account. As an example, the City of Mississauga’s corporate Twitter account has more than 84,000 followers. In comparison, the current Traffic Management mascot for the Town of Newmarket (Safety Cone Sam) has approximately 190 followers for an account that was initiated in May of 2012. That Twitter account last posted road safety messaging in March 2022.

A dedicated social media channel would also require an individual or multiple people to manage and schedule frequent posts to build and maintain that following. Responding to any comments or replies on social media posts also requires a large time commitment. This would also require capacity from the City’s graphic design staff to consistently develop content using the mascot’s image.

## **Logistics**

**Development of Policy and Procedures** – Existing mascots used by the City have a Policy and Procedures document developed that outlines the process for booking the costume, the type of training that needs to be completed before someone is permitted to use the costume, procedures for borrowing the costume and what each borrower is responsible for while in possession of the costume.

**Storage** – Mascot costumes are large and typically very heavy. They need to be stored appropriately to ensure they are not damaged and at a secure location that is also accessible for pick-up and drop-off. At the moment, no plan for storage of a costume has been developed. The City’s transition away from dedicated work spaces and a hybrid model of staff work locations also adds a new level of complexity to where and how a costume could be stored.

**Transportation** – Mascot costumes can be large and heavy. For example, the Parks, Forestry and Environment tree mascot and its accessories are stored in a bag that weighs approximately 35 pounds and is so large that it can only be transported in a flat-bed pick-up truck or a large cargo van. Appropriate transportation to and from any event or photo session needs to be arranged for each use.

**Cleaning** – There are many levels to keeping a mascot costume clean and each has its own financial implications. For example, the Parks, Forestry and Environment costume has an undergarment that is used that must be dry cleaned every time someone wears the costume (sweat) (\$75+); however, with COVID-19 – the recommendation would be to have the entire unit

cleaned for hygiene and safety measures. Alcohol wipes would also need to be used near the mouth area as there would often be a spit/breath smell from the previous user.

In addition, a rug company in Etobicoke has been used to fully clean the costume (\$400) – it is time consuming to co-ordinate transport and delivery. This is even more complicated during a busy time of year with several events within close timeframes.

Specific costs for a Road Safety Committee mascot would need to be determined based on the final design and costume.

**Staffing** – Each mascot appearance would require one individual to be inside of the costume as well as a handler to help them navigate around the event and also speak to people. Mascots do not speak and rely significantly on their handler. The more frequently the mascot makes appearances at public events, the more human resources will be required – to wear the costume, be a handler and transport the costume.

**Training** – The individual inside of the costume as well as the handler need to go through appropriate training, which also needs to be developed before a mascot could be deployed at public events. Training includes information about how to interact with the public, how to be a handler, how to put on and take off the costume, etc. This training exists for the Parks , Forestry and Environment mascot, but a specific session related to the ultimate Road Safety Committee Mascot needs to be developed.

**Waiver** – If the individuals in the mascot costume are not employed City staff, there may be a need for a waiver to be completed. This is something that would require consultation with the City's legal and risk management department.

**Events** – A plan is required for which events the mascot will attend. Allowance for costume cleaning between events and appropriate transportation is also required.

Mascot appearances are limited to 30 minutes to avoid the person inside from overheating and suffering from exhaustion while wearing the costume. The individual inside also needs to be provided with cooling packs and a fan to ensure they do not overheat.

## **Financial Implications**

**Cost of design** – As stated above, the City of Mississauga's Creative Services team does not have the capacity or in-house expertise to take on the sole responsibility of developing a concept and design for a mascot. This means that the City will need to seek assistance from external vendors to develop a concept and graphic for the Road Safety Committee mascot. At this time, staff do not have an estimate of what that cost would be.

**Cost of costume** – The cost of purchasing a costume is also something that staff need to research further. Staff have been advised that previous mascot costume purchases cost between \$3,000 - \$8,000. Given current inflation, those costs have likely risen to approximately \$5,000 - \$15,000. It should also be noted that if a custom costume needs to be made to align with the ultimate mascot design, this cost would likely be significantly higher. At this time, staff do not have an estimate of that cost.

**Operational costs** – In addition to costs for designing and purchasing of a physical costume, staff have been advised about the operational costs associated with a physical mascot. As stated above, there are potential costs for staffing both the individual inside the costume and the handler for each event the mascot is scheduled to attend. There are also storage, cleaning, transportation and other miscellaneous costs that must be accounted for. Staff would need to develop a plan for each of these requirements to determine an estimated annual operation costs.

Based on consultation with Clerks Division staff, **it is estimated that the funds allocated for all of the City's Advisory Committees would not be sufficient or appropriate to cover the costs of designing and purchasing a mascot costume.** Annual operational costs also need to be accounted for when moving forward with mascot development.

**Recommendations:**

1. That staff take a phased approach to mascot concept and design by costing out the development of a digital concept that is appropriately branded with the assistance of City of Mississauga's Marketing and Creative Team and an external vendor who specializes in mascot development, to be used in future Road Safety Committee communication campaigns.
2. That based on availability of funds in the Committee Support budget (Clerk's Division), staff be directed to commence the first phase by having a digital mascot concept developed.
3. That staff explore the start-up and operational costs and logistics of transitioning a digital mascot into a physical costume to be used at future events by the Road Safety Committee.
4. That staff report back providing the ultimate estimated cost of a physical mascot and that a formal budget request be brought to Council for consideration.